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Published in:
Journal of Reserach in Gender Studies

DOI:
[10.22381/JRGS7120174](https://doi.org/10.22381/JRGS7120174)

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Campbell, J, Thomson, E & Ross, S 2017, 'Recession and recovery in Scotland: the impact on women's labor market participation beyond the headline statistics', *Journal of Reserach in Gender Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.22381/JRGS7120174>

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RECESSION AND RECOVERY IN SCOTLAND: THE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION BEYOND THE HEADLINE STATISTICS

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the impact of the great recession and subsequent economic recovery on the position of women within the labor market in Scotland. In common with other developed economies, Scotland experienced the most serious financial crisis since 1929 and the longest and deepest recession since the early 1930s. Despite this, the economic data would suggest that women's position in the labor market has improved significantly over recent years as the economy began to recover as there are now a record number of women in employment. However, using secondary literature and official labor market figures, this article argues that the data only tells part of the story since a lot of these jobs could be described as precarious, involving atypical contracts of employment. That is the job does not involve a full-time contract of employment with a single employer for an indefinite period. The article concludes that the increase in women's participation in the formal labor market has not resulted in a significant improvement in gender equality nor has it led to a redistribution of unpaid work between women and men.

Keywords: recession; recovery; Scotland; women; labor market participation

How to cite: Campbell, Jim, Susanne Ross, and Emily Thomson (2017), "Recession and Recovery in Scotland: The Impact on Women's Labor Market Participation beyond the Headline Statistics," <i>Journal of Research in Gender Studies</i> 7(1): 123–136.

Received 23 January 2017 • Received in revised form 17 March 2017

Accepted 18 March 2017 • Available online 1 April 2017

Introduction

Scotland entered into recession in the third quarter of 2008 and remained there for five quarters until the third quarter of 2009. The Scottish economy experienced a peak to trough decline in output of 5.6%, compared to 6.3% for the UK as a whole (Gillespie, 2013: 14). The recovery in Scotland proceeded at a relatively slow pace and it was not until the end of 2013 that the lost output experienced during the great recession was recovered. The impact of recession on women and men depends on their different starting positions in the paid labor market, occupational grouping and allocation of earnings (Rubery, 1988/2010; Rubery and Rafferty, 2012) as well as their relative positions with respect to the state in terms of welfare provision (Sainsbury, 1996). Analysis of the headline employment figures indicate that the “employment gap” between women and men narrowed significantly during Scotland’s economic recovery, as women’s employment increased at a faster rate than men’s. On the face of it, economic recovery has been a “good news” story for Scotland’s women. However, focusing solely on headline employment statistics gives a partial analysis that could underestimate the true impact of recession and recovery on gender equality in paid labor markets (Harkness, 2013). Similarly, a focus on paid work alone is limited in assessing gender equality, given the gendered division of labor in households where women undertake the majority of unpaid household work, particularly care. Making use of secondary data and official labor market statistics, this paper aims to develop a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the great recession and subsequent economic recovery on the labor market position of women in Scotland by considering the nature of employment growth and the impact of recession and recovery on unpaid work.

Employment and Unemployment in Scotland

Table 1 Employment in Scotland (16–64) 2008–2016 (Thousands)

Period	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Dec 07–Feb 08	2550 (74.4)	1331 (79.1)	1219 (69.9)
Dec 09–Feb 10	2459 (70.5)	1269 (74.1)	1190 (66.9)
Dec 15–Feb 16	2608 (73.8)	1340 (77.0)	1268 (74.8)

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016a

As Table 1 shows, the “great recession,” defined as the period between December–February 2008 and December–February 2010, resulted in a significant fall in the overall level of employment in Scotland. Despite the recovery being somewhat long and erratic, the numbers in employment had returned to their pre-recession levels by 2015. The most significant change is that the gap between male and female employment rates narrowed signif-

icantly over the course of the recession and recovery, from 9.2% in 2008 to 2.2% at the beginning of 2016. This is the result of female employment rising at a much faster pace than male employment post-recession. Female employment is now higher than pre-recession levels and indeed since comparable records began in 1992 (Office for National Statistics, 2016a). Changes in the social security system, in particular the increase in the state pension age for women to bring it into line with men, has resulted in more women working longer or seeking additional employment to augment private pension provisions, may have accounted for some of the increase in female employment (Office for National Statistics, 2013; Webster, 2014; Scottish Government, 2015a, 2016).

During the 2008–09 recession, total employment in Scotland fell by 91,000, over two-thirds of the decrease was accounted for by the decline in male employment. Therefore, the impact in employment terms has been greater for men than women. This is not unique to Scotland and indeed the tendency for this recession to have a disproportionate impact on the employment of men led some commentators to describe it as a “mancession,” a phrase coined in the USA to describe the trends in unemployment in the recession’s early stages (Perry, 2009; Wall, 2009). The impact of any economic downturn tends to be borne mostly by men because there is a greater concentration of male workers in cyclically sensitive industries, such as construction and manufacturing. Over the whole period between 2008 and 2016 the number of men in employment increased by 0.7% whereas the number of women in employment increased by 4.0%. The unemployment figures reveal a similar pattern.

Table 2 Unemployment in Scotland (16+) 2008–2016 (Thousands)

Period	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Dec 07–Feb 08	131 (4.9)	74 (5.2)	56 (4.4)
Dec 09–Feb 10	210 (7.9)	132 (9.4)	78 (6.2)
Dec 15–Feb 16	171 (6.1)	102 (7.1)	69 (5.1)

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016a

As Table 2 shows, during the recession, unemployment in Scotland rose by 58,000 for men and 22,000 for women, therefore men accounted for three-quarters of the increase in total unemployment. Since the onset of the expansionary phase in 2010, male unemployment levels have recovered at a much faster rate, falling by 30,000, a 23% decline compared to a reduction of 9,000 or 12% for women. Over the whole period, from 2008 to 2016, male unemployment has risen by 28,000, an increase of 38%, while female unemployment rose by 13,000, an increase of 23%. Men therefore accounted for 70% of the increase in total unemployment between 2008 and 2016.

The evidence would seem to suggest that women have experienced a “better” recession and recovery, both in terms of employment and unemploy-

ment than men and this has been reflected in a narrowing of the gender gap in economic activity rates. That is, the percentage of the working age population who are either in work or are actively seeking work.

Table 3 Economic Activity Rate in Scotland (16–64) 2008–2016

Period	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Dec 07–Feb 08	78.3%	83.6%	73.1%
Dec 09–Feb 10	76.6%	82.0%	71.4%
Dec 15–Feb 16	78.7%	83.0%	74.7%

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016a

Both men and women experienced a decline in their economic activity rates during the great recession, however over the whole period between 2008 and 2016 the gap between women and men in terms of economic activity narrowed from 10.5% to 8.3%. However, it is important to look beyond the headline figures and explore in more detail the types of jobs which have resulted in an increase in women's economic activity rates and the important differences which still persist in terms of the nature of employment pursued by women and men in Scotland.

Table 4 Full-time and Part-time Employment in Scotland 2008–2016 (Thousands)

Period	Total FT (%) ¹	Total PT (%) ¹	Male FT (%) ²	Male PT (%) ²	Female FT (%) ³	Female PT (%) ³
2008	1903 (75.2)	628 (24.8)	1196 (89.9)	135 (10.1)	706 (58.8)	494 (41.2)
2010	1799 (72.7)	677 (27.3)	1120 (87.7)	157 (12.3)	678 (56.7)	520 (43.4)
2016	1870 (72.8)	699 (27.2)	1143 (86.9)	170 (13.1)	727 (58.1)	525 (41.9)

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016a

¹ As % of the total number in employment

² As % of the total number of males in employment

³ As % of the total number of females in employment

In 2016, 41.9% of women in work were employed part-time compared to only 13.1% of men in employment. Part-time employment is normally defined as working less than 30 hours per week (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016). The proportion of women working part-time has remained fairly constant over the whole period, whilst there has been a rise in the proportion of men on part-time contracts, particularly since the great recession. Over the whole period, full-time employment has fallen by 1.7% while the number of part-time jobs has increased by 11.3%. The number of men in part-time employment between 2008 and 2016 increased by 26% compared to a rise of 6% for women. However part-time employment still remains predominantly undertaken by women who account for 75% of those employed part-time in 2016.

Whilst the majority of people working part-time do so through choice, a growing number do so because they could not find a full-time job. In 2008, 10.4% of people in part-time employment fell into this category rising to 14.7% in 2016 (Office for National Statistics, 2016a). These figures are not disaggregated by gender at a Scottish level but it would seem reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of both men and women on part-time contracts would have preferred a full-time contract.

Self-Employment and Underemployment

Table 5 Self-employment in Scotland (16+) 2008–2016 (Thousands)

Period	Total (%) ¹	Male (%) ²	Female (%) ³
2008	269 (10.6)	188 (14.1)	81 (6.7)
2010	271 (10.9)	187 (14.6)	84 (7.0)
2016	299 (11.6)	195 (14.8)	104 (8.3)

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2016a

¹ As a % of total number in employment

² As a % of the total number of males in employment

³ As a % of the total number of females in employment

Whilst the majority of self-employed individuals are men, there has been a growing incidence of women moving into self-employment since the great recession. Table 5 demonstrates that self-employment has risen for both men and women in recent years. However the fastest increase has been amongst women with a 26% rise in the numbers self-employed over the period 2008–16, compared to an increase in men’s self-employment of just 4%. Although the self-employed are still male dominated, women’s share of the total rose from 30.1% in 2008 to 34.8% in 2016. Whilst this might be taken as evidence of a more dynamic and entrepreneurial economy, it should also be recognized that people may enter into self-employment through necessity rather than choice. Using the OECD’s definition of part-time employment, 55.3% of self-employed women would be classified as part-time compared to 21.9% of men in 2016 (Office for National Statistics, 2016a).

The increase in self-employment over recent years has attracted a different type of “entrepreneur” in terms of gender, hours of work, and occupation. Sectors not traditionally associated with self-employment such as education, information and communications, financial services and social security have experienced the largest increases (Philpott, 2012).

The increase in self-employment and part-time employment amongst both men and women over recent years might help to explain why the great recession did not result in high rates of unemployment similar to those experienced in the economic recessions in the early 1980s and early 1990s, even though the fall in output was much higher in the great recession

compared to previous recessions (Hogarth et al., 2009). In addition, the great recession resulted in an increase in the incidence of underemployment, indicating that the growing use of precarious and insecure forms of employment may have mitigated the job losses associated with the fall in output, particularly for women.

Underemployment is defined as: “those people in employment who are willing to work more hours, either by working in an additional job, by working more hours in their current job, or by switching to a replacement job” (Office for National Statistics, 2014: 25).

In Scotland the underemployment rate rose from 7.0% in 2008 to 10.6% in 2013 and currently stands at 9.1% (Scottish Government, 2016). Over the period 2008 to 2016, underemployment rose by 57,900, predominantly driven by rising levels of underemployment among female part-time workers. In 2016, 55% of the underemployed were women and it was particularly prevalent amongst those on part-time contracts affecting 18% of women employed part-time (Scottish Government, 2016).

Underemployment also encompasses the underutilization of skills, for example, graduates working in low skilled employment. There is limited data available on skills related underemployment partly because it is difficult to measure. However, in 2014 the UK Commission for Employment and Skills found that 17% of staff in Scotland reported as over-qualified or over-skilled for the job they were doing. Some evidence supports the contention that women work below their current skills levels in an attempt to manage the balance between paid and unpaid work such as mothers returning to the formal labor market taking jobs below their qualifications and skill levels. This choice is made under conditions of constraint such as the inability to find suitable, affordable childcare and the lack of part-time opportunities in higher skilled and higher paid jobs. The evidence suggests that women experience higher rates of underemployment compared to men both in terms of wanting to work additional hours or working at a lower level of skills than they are qualified to do (Dias et al., 2016).

Associated with the growth in underemployment has been the increased incidence of zero-hours contracts (ZHC). A zero-hours contract is generally understood to be one where the employer does not have to offer a minimum number of hours and the employee is not obliged to accept any work offered. In 2016, 903,000 people in the UK were employed on ZHC; 2.9% of those in employment compared to 147,000 in 2006, only 0.5% of those in employment (Office for National Statistics, 2016b). People on ZHC are more likely to be women, young, part-time or in full-time education. 55% of those on ZHC in 2016 were women accounting for 3.4% of women in employment whereas 2.4% of men in employment were on such contracts. In Scotland

78,000 people or 3% of those in employment were on ZHC in 2016 (Office for National Statistics, 2016b).

Despite the increasing number of women entering the paid labor market their experience tends to be rather different to men's. They are more likely to be part-time, whether they are an employee or self-employed, underemployed and working with a precarious contract. They are also more likely to be paid less contributing to Scotland's significant gender pay gap.

The Gender Pay Gap

The increasing participation of women in the labor market in Scotland has contributed to a fall in the gender pay gap (using median hourly earnings for all employees including part-time but excluding overtime payments). In 1997 when the figures were first calculated it stood at 27.5% and by 2015 had fallen to its lowest recorded level of 16.8% (Office for National Statistics, 2016c). A crude calculation indicates that, at the current rate of decline, it would take until around 2050 for the gender pay gap to be eliminated altogether in Scotland. The persistence of the gender pay gap has been exacerbated by the prevalence of part-time contracts amongst women; if we compare the gender pay gap amongst full-time employees it is much lower at 9.5% in 2016 (Office for National Statistics, 2016c). One reason for the persistence of the gender pay gap is the continued gender divide in terms of the occupations men and women are likely to pursue (Couppie et al., 2014). Despite the fact that women's educational attainment is consistently higher than men's, in 2013, 57% of all women in employment were in medium to low skilled jobs compared to 37% of men (Scottish Government, 2015b: 10).

Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation by gender is one of the most pervasive articulations of women's inequality in labor markets. In all modern labor markets, men and women's paid employment is clustered to varying degrees into occupations that are dominated by their gender (Blau et al., 2013) and Scotland is no exception. Occupational segregation by gender can be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal segregation occurs where stereotyped assumptions about male and female capabilities and preferences concentrate women into predominantly "female" occupations (and men into "male" occupations). Vertical segregation occurs where women are over-represented towards the bottom of organizational hierarchies and men tend to dominate senior managerial posts. The current occupational figures for Scotland indicate that the most segregated occupations are Secretarial and Related occupations (only 5% men) and

Skilled Construction and Building trades (only 1% women) (Office for National Statistics, 2015).

As Table 6 demonstrates women dominate employment in the public administration, education and health sectors while other services, banking finance and insurance, along with distribution, hotels and restaurants are roughly in balance; men dominate all of the other sectors. In terms of the gender split by industry there has been little change over the ten years between 2005 and 2015 despite the increase in the number of women in the labor market during that time.

Table 6 Employment by Sector and Gender 2005 and 2015 (% of total)

Sector	2005 women	2005 men	2015 women	2015 men
Agriculture & Forestry	23.2%	76.8%	19.2%	80.8%
Energy & Water	16.3%	83.7%	20.8%	79.2%
Manufacturing	26.4%	73.6%	26.0%	74.0%
Construction	12.7%	87.3%	14.2%	85.8%
Distribution, Hotels & Restaurants	54.0%	46.0%	53.4%	46.6%
Transport & Communications	23.9%	76.1%	21.7%	78.3%
Banking, Finance & Insurance	48.1%	51.9%	46.2%	53.8%
Public Administration Education & Health	71.5%	28.5%	70.7%	29.3%
Other Services	50.9%	49.1%	55.7%	44.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2015

Table 7 Occupational Segregation 2005 and 2015 (% of total employment by gender)

Occupation	2005 Female	2005 Male	2015 Female	2015 Male
Managers, Directors & Senior Officials	5.9%	10.8%	6.9%	10.6%
Professional	17.3%	15.8%	20.8%	18.9%
Associate Professional & Technical	10.4%	13.8%	11.8%	14.1%
Administrative & Secretarial	21.7%	4.9%	17.8%	4.2%
Skilled Trades	2.3%	20.2%	2.3%	19.8%
Personal Services	15.2%	2.8%	16.7%	3.4%
Sales & Customer Services	13.6%	6.0%	11.5%	6.2%
Process, Plant & Machine Operators	1.9%	12.9%	1.5%	10.3%
Elementary	11.2%	12.4%	10.3%	12.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2015

In terms of occupations the evidence suggests that gender segregation is still a major problem and although women have increased their relative share in professional and senior positions, 46% of women were still employed in the

relatively lower paid personal services, sales and administrative and secretarial occupations, slightly lower than the comparable figure in 2005 of 50.5%. Despite women increasing their comparative share in the professional occupations it is within these areas that the biggest pay gaps exist. For example, the gender pay for professional, scientific and technical occupations was 31% in 2015 (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The Law Society of Scotland (2015) recently reported that there was a 42% gap between female and male solicitors in Scotland. In addition, in the occupational categories where women form the majority, there is an 12% pay gap with women being paid less than men despite comprising 80% of administrative and secretarial employees (Close the Gap, 2016).

Horizontal segregation begins when individuals are in formal education, and there is evidence to suggest that it starts at an even earlier age (Gadassi and Gati, 2009) where parents, nursery workers and primary teachers pass on implicit and explicit stereotypes about the appropriateness of certain jobs for either genders. Children then grow up to make career choices based on these stereotypes and assumptions. In Scottish Universities, in 2014–15 women dominated those graduating with undergraduate degrees in subjects allied to health (70% female). Men dominated those graduating with first degrees in computer science (83%) and engineering and technology (83%) (Scottish Funding Council, 2016).

Vocational education also displays patterns of severe gender segregation in terms of occupation and level of qualification (Thomson, 2016). In Scotland, the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) is the main route for vocational training. The MA is a publicly funded training program giving individuals the opportunity to combine employment and training by following an industry designed training framework. MA frameworks include occupations in the “traditional” sectors where the notion of apprenticeship training is well established such as in construction and engineering, and in “non-traditional” sectors where the concept of apprenticeship training is relatively new, mainly in service sector and caring occupations. In June 2016, there were 36,371 MAs in training in Scotland; of those, 10,732 were women, a female participation rate of 30%. This highlights the nature of gender segregation on the MA program – both vertical, in that women are concentrated in the lower levels of attainment, and horizontal as women are concentrated in the non-traditional service sector and caring occupations. Engineering is the largest framework in terms of numbers “in-training” but of the 4669 apprentice engineers in Scotland, only 4% were female (Skills Development Scotland, 2016).

Therefore, whilst more women now participate in the formal labor market there is still a significant gender pay gap, underpinned by vertical and horizontal occupational segregation.

Unpaid Work and Caring: “Women’s Work”?

It has been convincingly argued that women’s uneven position in the paid labor market is intrinsically linked to their over-representation among those undertaking unpaid, reproductive work in the home (Antonopoulos, 2009; Ferrant et al., 2014). Unpaid work in the form of care or domestic (re)production is not formally recognized in official statistics but rather is classified as economic inactivity. For women the main reason given for economic inactivity in Scotland was looking after the family/home 28.3% in July 2015–June 2016 compared to 6.9% for men. The main reason for men’s economic inactivity was long-term sickness, 33.1% (Office for National Statistics, 2016a).

Based on data from the Scottish Household Survey, during 2007–08, it was estimated that there were approximately 657,000 unpaid adult carers in Scotland, 62% of whom were women and over half were of working age (Stewart and Patterson, 2010). Scottish Government statistics for 2012/13 indicate there were 759,000 carers aged 16+, 59% of whom were women (Scottish Government, 2015b, 2015c). They also reported that working age women were much more likely than men to be carers (*ibid.*) which clearly impacts on their availability for paid work and results in breaks in employment and fewer opportunities to accrue the experience needed to progress in their careers.

The Harmonized European Time-Use Survey reports that unpaid work remains typically gendered where women are more than twice as likely than men to undertake unpaid productive work (Eurofound, 2012; Gershuny, 2011). In 2012, the average number of hours per week that employed women spent on the provision of unpaid childcare in the UK was 47 hours compared to 26 hours for employed men. Employed women also do more household work – 14 hours versus 9 hours for employed men (Eurofound, 2012). The OECD reported that in 2011 non-working fathers in the UK devoted less time to childcare (63 minutes per day) than working mothers (81 minutes per day) (Miranda, 2011). This evidence suggests that even as women have moved into the paid labor market in greater numbers, their role as care-givers and household provisioners has not necessarily diminished at the same rate, indicating a key labor market constraint for women in the form of a “second shift” (Hochschild and Machung, 2012).

Unpaid work can include a variety of activities, including domestic, care and voluntary work and contributes greatly to the wellbeing of individuals, households and communities. Feminist economists have long argued that its omission from official measures of economic activity and performance undervalues women’s true contribution to the economy by characterizing unpaid work as unproductive (Hirway, 2015). The United Nations (2013)

estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10% and 39% of GDP. Evidence suggests that care work, performed largely by women whether paid or unpaid, is particularly valuable to the Scottish economy, although the economic value of unpaid work is not routinely measured. Current estimates included in the Office for National Statistics household satellite account indicate that total “home production” activities as a proportion of GDP was 56.1% in 2014, up 3.9% from 2005 (Office for National Statistics, 2016d). Childcare represents the largest component of home production, accounting for 31% of the total. In addition the value of informal childcare has grown by an annual average of 6% between 2005 and 2014 (*ibid.*). Informal adult care has had an average annual growth rate of 4.2% from 2005–2014 based on an increase in the number of hours per cared-for person, rather than an increase in the number of adults requiring care (*ibid.*).

Conclusion

Despite the return of economic growth over recent years the recovery in Scotland has been largely fuelled by increasingly precarious and casual forms of employment, as well as insecure self-employment, which has impacted more on women than on men. As evidenced above, these forms of employment tend to be concentrated in lower skilled, female dominated and subsequently low paid sectors of the economy. Horizontal and vertical segregation which underpins Scotland’s persistent gender pay gap has remained largely unchanged. Therefore, the question remains as to whether these precarious and casual forms of employment are becoming the norm in Scotland’s post-recession labor market, reinforcing low paid and insecure forms of employment, predominantly undertaken by women. Evidence so far suggests that they are entrenching gender inequality within the formal paid labor market in Scotland and at the same time increasing the burden of unpaid work for women. In other words, whilst the participation of women in the formal labor market in Scotland is now at record levels, it has done very little to improve gender equality or to significantly impact on the distribution of unpaid work within the economy.

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